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**THROSSEL HOLE PRIORY** is a training monastery and retreat centre following the Serene Reflection Meditation tradition (Soto Zen). It is affiliated with Shasta Abbey whose Spiritual Director is Rev. Master Jiyu-Kennett. Shasta Abbey is the headquarters of the Order of Buddhist Contemplatives and is located in Mount Shasta, California. The monks of Throssel Hole Priory are members of the Order of Buddhist Contemplatives and follow the teaching and example of Rev. Master Jiyu-Kennett.

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**PLEASE NOTE.** We would like to clarify our use of the word 'He' when referring to the 'Eternal,' the 'Cosmic Buddha,' the 'Dharmakaya,' 'Avalokiteshwara Bodhisattva' etc. Whenever 'He' is used, understand that what is meant is 'He/She/It.' We simplify our usage in this way so that the continuity of the articles is not repeatedly broken up by the form 'He/She/It,' and also because we have not yet found another word which conveys the complete meaning.

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# The Buddha's Practical Teaching on the Resolutions of Conflicts

Rev. Daishin Morgan, M.O.B.C.

During the lifetime of the Buddha, the Sangha was widely dispersed and not all the monks lived with the Buddha. Within the different groups that existed different specialities emerged. All adhered to the same teaching and practised meditation, but some laid more emphasis on studying the Vinaya while others emphasised doctrinal study.

In the district of Kosambi, a dispute arose between two such groups over whether one of their number had committed a minor offence against the Vinaya or not. It is recorded in the Vinaya that this monk knew the Dharma and was "wise, intelligent, modest, conscientious and anxious for training".

The two groups took partisan positions, one side eventually passing a sentence of expulsion on the monk, the other claiming that no offence had been committed. The Buddha was told of what had happened and so He went to those who had passed a sentence of expulsion and said to them, "You should not expel one you know to be learned, intelligent, modest, conscientious and anxious for training, especially when there is disagreement in the Sangha over whether an offence was committed. You should not cause dissension in the Sangha by taking such an unreasonable position."

Having said this the Buddha then went to the other group who did not think any offence had been committed and he said to them, "Do not think that if you have committed an offence you need not have contrition for that offence. If one of you is accused of something which he considers not to have been an offence but which other members of the Sangha say is an offence, and if you know that these other monks are wise, learned, intelligent, modest, conscientious and

anxious for training then you should recognise that they would not act out of spite and have a good intention. Accordingly you should stand in awe of causing a division and acknowledge the offence on the authority of the community."

Having thus spoken to both sides the Buddha went away. However the matter did not end there. Quarrels continued and they even came to blows. The lay supporters were disgusted and with the moderate monks went to the Buddha who once again rebuked the quarrelsome monks and exhorted them to sit quietly together and to cease from hurting each other with harsh words and actions. But the Buddha's words fell on deaf ears and the disputes continued. For a third time the Buddha intervened saying, "Enough! Let there be no altercations, no contention, no disunion, no quarrel!"

In response one of the contending monks said to Him, "with all due respect why don't you stay out of it, the responsibility for this quarrel lies with us." This view was not contradicted by the rest and so the Buddha tried to bring them to their senses by means of a parable.

"In former times there was a king named Brahmadata of the rich and powerful country of Kasi. Brahmadata was greedy and ambitious. He saw that the neighbouring kingdom of Kosala was poor and had only a weak army so he started a war of conquest. The Kosalan army rapidly collapsed, and as the invading army advanced upon the capital, the king of Kosala, whose name was Dighiti, realized there was nothing he could do to stop the invasion and so he fled with his queen. They wandered in fear of their lives and eventually settled near Benares, the capital of Kasi. They lived in disguise in a potter's dwelling where the queen gave birth to a son whom they called Dighavu.

As Dighavu grew up, his father Dighiti, knowing how dangerous was their situation, sent him outside the town to be educated. Not long afterwards Dighiti

and his queen were betrayed and captured by Brahmadata who sentenced them to be cruelly executed. As they were being taken out of the town to the execution ground they met young Dighavu returning from his schooling. Dighiti said to his son, "Do not look long, my dear Dighavu, and do not look short. For not by hatred is hatred appeased; only by love is hatred appeased."

The soldiers who were to carry out the execution did not know that Dighavu was the son of King Dighiti and thought Dighiti was raving, but Dighiti told them, "I am not mad my friends, nor do I rave. He who is clever will understand what I say." The soldiers just laughed, took them away and executed them.

Poor Dighavu saw all this and was distraught. Yet through his grief he determined to give his parents a proper funeral and so he gave strong drink to the soldiers and when they had passed out he gathered up the remains of his parents and placed them on a funeral pyre. As the flames leapt up he circumambulated the pyre with great reverence. From the terrace of his palace the evil King Brahmadata saw the funeral pyre and the reverent behaviour of Dighavu and was filled with a terrible foreboding.

After the funeral, Dighavu went to the forest where he wept and grieved. Then, drying his tears, he returned to Benares and sought employment in the elephant stables near the palace. Early one morning Dighavu arose and as the dawn came he sang a beautiful song and accompanied himself on the lute. Brahmadata heard him singing and ordered his servants to fetch whoever it was that sang so beautifully. In order to win the king's favour, Dighavu sang in a beautiful voice and played upon the lute in such a way that the king's heart was soothed. Brahmadata then asked Dighavu to be his attendant—an offer which Dighavu accepted. Gradually Dighavu began to be trusted by Brahmadata and he became a constant companion. One day Brahmadata said to Dighavu, "Come my young friend, harness my chariot and we will go hunting."

During the hunt they became separated from the rest of the royal retinue. Brahmadatta became tired so they pulled up and rested. Brahmadatta slept with his head in Dighavu's lap.

As Dighavu watched Brahmadatta sleeping, the memory of all that he had suffered at the king's hands came before his mind and thinking the time had come for him to satisfy his hatred, he unsheathed his sword. But as he was about to strike he remembered the words that his father had spoken to him as he was being dragged to the execution ground, "Do not look long, my dear Dighavu, do not look short. For not by hatred, my dear Dighavu, is hatred appeased; by love alone is hatred appeased." Three times he raised his sword and three times he remembered his father's words and put up his sword. Suddenly the king awoke in terror and jumped up in alarm. Dighavu asked him why he started so and Brahmadatta the king replied, "My dear young friend I dreamed that Dighavu, the son of King Dighiti of Kosala, came upon me with a sword!"

Then, Dighavu, while stroking the king's head with his left hand and with his right hand unsheathing his sword, said to the king, "I am that young Dighavu, you have killed my parents, robbed me of my lands, scattered my people and caused me great suffering—now is the time for me to satisfy my hatred." At this Brahmadatta prostrated himself before Dighavu and begged for his life. Dighavu then realised that he could not kill his adversary and so was in peril himself and said, "Lord, why do you beg me for your life, when it is I who should beg you for my life."

At this Brahmadatta said, "Very well then I will grant you your life if you will grant me mine." Then having granted each other their lives Brahmadatta and Dighavu grasped each other's hands and swore an oath never to do any harm to each other.

They returned to the palace where king Brahmadatta called all his ministers together and instructed them that none should cause harm to

Dighavu. King Brahmadatta then asked Dighavu, "What did your father mean when he said in the hour of his death 'Do not look long, my dear Dighavu, do not look short. For not by hatred, my dear Dighavu, is hatred appeased; only by love, my dear Dighavu, is hatred appeased'?"

Dighavu replied, "My father's meaning was do not let your hatred last long and do not be hasty to fall out with your friends, this is what he meant when he said 'do not look long; do not look short' and then he said, "for not by hatred, my dear Dighavu, is hatred appeased; by love alone is hatred appeased." If I should have deprived you of life, O King, then your partisans would have deprived me of mine and my partisans would have deprived those of their lives and thus hatred would never be appeased. This was my father's meaning."

On hearing this Brahmadatta restored to Dighavu all his lands and servants, his troops and all his possessions."

At the conclusion of this story the Buddha turned to the disputatious monks of Kosambi and said to them, "If even proud kings and warriors can find such forbearance surely you, having embraced the religious life, must be forbearing and mild. Enough, O monks, let there be no altercations, no contentions, no disunion, no quarrels!"

But despite all the Buddha's efforts the monks would not be reunited and obdurately stuck to their opinions. The Blessed One thought, "Truly these fools are infatuated; it is no easy task to administer instruction to them,"—and he rose from his seat and said to the assembly,

"Loud is the noise that ordinary men make when they let themselves fall into arguments. Nobody thinks *himself* a fool, nor do they value anyone else higher than themselves. Even the clever words of the eloquent are but noisy confusion as they open wide

their mouths. They do not see by whom they are led!

'He has reviled me, he has beaten me, he has oppressed me, he has robbed me,'—in those who harbour such thoughts hatred will never be appeased. For not by hatred is hatred ever appeased but by love alone—this is an eternal law.

The ignorant do not know that we must control our minds and keep ourselves under control but those who learn this, their quarrels are appeased. If even those who have had their bones broken and their lives destroyed by their enemies can find conciliation, why can't you!"

The Buddha then reflected that, if you have a wise friend who is constant and lives by the Precepts, then you can happily walk with them in mindfulness and overcome all dangers. But if you find no wise companion who is constant and lives righteously, then you should walk alone like a king who has given up his realm to live the holy life, or like an elephant alone in the forest. It is better to walk alone than with a fool.

So saying, the Buddha took up his alms bowl and left Kosambi. As he went on his way he met other disciples who were quietly doing their training and living in unity and accord with each other. Each exercised towards the others friendliness in action, word and thought, both openly and in secret, so that they blended harmoniously like water and milk. Each was prepared to give up their own will and live according to the will of the Sangha for although the body of each was different their minds were as one. They expressed their earnestness and resolve in the way they worked hard in quiet harmony at their religious observances and all the practical tasks of daily life. After preaching the Dharma and encouraging these monks, the Buddha continued to the forest where he sat alone, away from the argumentative and contentious monks.

Nearby was a herd of elephants, one of whose

number, a noble beast, had become tired of living with the rest who were only interested in food and sex. He left the herd behind and wandering alone came to the same forest grove where the Buddha was. There the elephant administered to the needs of the Blessed One with his trunk, providing him with water and food. Both the Blessed One and the elephant lived in perfect harmony with each other until the Buddha thought fit to depart to Savatthi.

Meanwhile, realising that the quarrelsome monks had caused the Blessed One to leave, the lay devotees of Kosambi began to treat the monks as a nuisance and an obstacle. They refused to provide them with food and show them the respect normally due, hoping that the monks would either go away or come to their senses and begin to act like monks again. Faced with the prospect of empty stomachs, the monks rapidly realised that there were more important things than their petty arguments about minor points of law so they resolved to seek out the Buddha at Savatthi and resolve their differences.

At Savatthi, the monks who were dwelling with the Buddha saw the Kosambi monks approaching and went to the Buddha to ask Him how they should behave towards them. The Buddha instructed them to hear the Dharma on both sides and then side with those who were right according to the Dharma and the Vinaya, with those who uphold what has been spoken and practised by the Tathagata. Then Anathapindika, on behalf of the householders, asked how they should behave towards disputatious monks. The Buddha said that they should bestow alms on both sides and hear the Dharma on both sides and then accept the cause and opinion of the monks who were right according to the Dharma. The Buddha also arranged for the Kosambi monks to be given separate quarters but for all monks to share equally in any alms that might be donated.

Once the Kosambi monks had arrived at Savatthi, the monk who had been accused of the offence, pondered over the teaching and came to the conclusion that he

had, after all, committed an offence. He went to those who had expelled him and acknowledged his offence and asked that they reinstate him. Those who supported this monk, claiming he had committed no offence, now went to the Buddha and asked what they should do. The Buddha also acknowledged that an offence had been committed but that the monk should now be restored. The two sides in the dispute then got together and unanimously resolved that the dispute be officially declared to be ended.

Afterwards the Buddha made the point that a resolution to reunite the Sangha after a dispute would only be lawful if the matter had been thoroughly investigated and the re-establishment of harmony was true in spirit as well as form.

The Buddha then offered guidance on what qualities should be possessed by one who is selected to lead in assembly. They should be blameless in moral conduct and watch over their behaviour having well controlled senses. They should be one whom their rivals do not reprove according to the Dharma—for there is nothing for which they could be censured. They must be well versed in the doctrine and its practice. A leader should not be perplexed nor tremble when they enter an assembly yet have a deep respect for all. They do not disparage their cause by vain talk but are skilful in answering questions and putting questions to others without hurt. By their timely words they solve the questions and gladden the wise. They have respect for their seniors, and are well versed in their Master's teaching. They are steadfast in seeing through any task given to them by the Sangha without thinking, "It is I who do this."

#### Note

Story from Mahavagga IX, 1. (Vinaya) Adapted from *Vinaya Texts Part II* translated by Rhys Davids & Oldenberg, (Motilal Banarsidas 1982.)

“We have offered incense, candles,  
flowers, and fruit . . . .”

Rev. Phoebe van Woerden, F.O.B.C.

*[What follows was inspired by a talk given by Rev. Master Jiyu-Kennett at the Berkeley Buddhist Priory in 1987]*

At the end of almost every ceremony we use the above phrase to express our willingness to give, to give in gratitude for the teaching, for the opportunity we have to train, for being alive. The greatest gift is our own training, the offering of ourselves, and what we put on the altar is a beautiful way to give this offering form.

The incense and candles stay the same, but in choosing the flowers we have an opportunity to express various aspects of the teaching as they arise in our lives. A flower arrangement may express an aspect of Buddhist doctrine, or something we have personally experienced as helpful in our training. In order that other people will be able to see the teaching portrayed on the altar, it is helpful to keep several things in mind.

In our effort to keep the Precepts, we do not cut flowers just to make a decoration but use artificial ones whenever possible. However, if you have a garden there may be broken flowers or clippings you can use. It is a common Buddhist practice to make use of whatever is right in front of you to express the Truth. So when someone gives you a bunch of flowers you can show your gratitude by using them in the most beautiful way you can. And you can always put a potted plant on your altar, if you wish.

When using artificial flowers make sure they are clean and presentable. They should also be in accordance with the seasons; if they are not, they can give a feeling of falseness instead of pointing to the

Truth. Talking about the seasons, there is no reason at all why Buddhists in the West cannot have a beautifully decorated evergreen tree in their home during the last weeks of December. In descriptions of the Buddha Land (in, for instance, the Lotus Sutra), Jewel Trees always feature prominently, so this is an excellent way to take something as familiar as a Xmas tree and give it a Buddhist meaning.

To express the Eternal within all seasons—the unchanging that is to be seen in the changing—in Spring you could use pink, yellow, and white flowers; in Summer, brightly-coloured flowers and green grasses; in Autumn, dried grasses and leaves, orange and purple flowers, or nuts and berries; and in Winter, bare branches, evergreens, and holly.

Grasses, evergreens (and in the East, bamboo) always stand for the Eternal. You may remember that Dogen Zenji has a special regard for 'the hundred grasses,' the numberless ways in which the Eternal and training are seen in the world around us.

Buddhism has long had a fondness for numbers. This may inspire you to use a certain number of flowers or branches to bring to mind a particular teaching. For example, the two opposites; the Three Treasures, or the three points in time, past, present, and future; the Four Noble Truths; the five skandhas; the six Paramitas (virtues) and the six worlds; the Seven Buddhas; the Noble Eightfold Path; and the Twelve Steps of Dependent Origination, to name only a few.

You may also wish to commemorate a religious anniversary. Reading the scriptures and other Buddhist works will give you even more ideas.

The lengths of the stems in relation to each other could suggest a certain direction: a rising up, a flowing, the going on, going on, always going on. Using light and dark flowers together could suggest the opposites, perhaps with an evergreen branch to point to the Third Position, the Eternal—the possibilities

are endless. You will find that ideas come up more easily once you start thinking of your altar, and the flowers you use, as valuable aids in your meditation practice.

It is best to keep it simple and natural, especially with a small home-altar. Also, it does not have to have an oriental 'feel' about it. There are plenty beautiful flowers in our own country. Even though a lotus has a special meaning in Buddhism, it is not the only flower suitable for an altar. For example, a single rhododendron flowerhead with some of its dark green leaves could be used to show a family gathered together looking up at the Eternal: the offering that day of you and your family.

\* \* \*

# Summer Meditation Retreat

AUGUST 12-18 and AUGUST 26-31

The word 'Sesshin' means 'to search the heart.' A sesshin lasts about a week and is an opportunity to go more deeply and intensively into meditation than is usually possible in one's daily practice. This is reflected in the longer time spent in formal meditation and the shorter work periods. There will be lectures throughout the week and an opportunity for private spiritual counselling.

## TYPICAL SCHEDULE

6.00am	Rising.
6.20	Meditation
6.55	Morning Service.
7.50	Temple Clean-up.
8.20	Breakfast.
8.50	Reading.
9.25	Meditation.
10.15	Working Meditation.
11.30	Tea.
11.45	Meditation.
1.00pm	Lunch.
1.30	Rest/Kitchen Clean-up
2.30	Working Meditation.
3.30	Midday Service/Meditation.
4.15	Tea/Class.
5.15	Meditation.
6.00	Medicine Meal.
6.35	Rest/Recollection.
7.25	Meditation.
8.40	Vespers.
	Meditation.
10.00	Lights Out.

A meditation retreat can be an excellent chance to come to a better understanding of the causes of suffering within oneself and, in the stillness of serene reflection meditation, to realise one's True Nature.

Although a sesshin can be strenuous, a common rhythm and harmony quickly develops with the help of the sincerity and encouragement of one's fellow trainees; this helps most people reach a level of sustained effort difficult to maintain on one's own. If you feel you would be unable to follow the full schedule, perhaps because of age or infirmity, this does not necessarily mean you cannot come to one of these retreat weeks—please write to the Guestmaster and explain your situation; we will do our best to help you.

People new to our practice should plan to attend an introductory retreat before coming to a sesshin.

[Please note the introductory retreat August 9-11 is followed directly by the first Summer Sesshin: August 12-18]

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# Letter from Sōji-ji

[Shasta Abbey has received the following communication from one of the Head Temples of The Sōtō Zen Church, Daihonzan Sōji-ji, Yokohama, Japan. The phrase 'human rights violations' mentioned in the text refers to articles published in the magazine *Chō-Ryū* which countenanced racial discrimination. The letter describes how serious mistakes in training are dealt with in Buddhism and, as Rev. Master Jiyu-Kennett remarks, 'this is truly the Buddhist Way.']

We have received the following communication from Daihonzan Sōji-ji in Yokohama, Japan, a translation' of which is printed here:-

## News of, and apologies for, the suspension of the publication of *Chō-Ryū*

Dear Sirs,

In this season when the sweltering heat of summer persists, we wish you our readers continued good health. Your faith in the preservation of this Temple has always harboured kindness as you have bestowed on us your support of *Chō-Ryū*; we are indebted and deeply appreciative for your readership.

For those of you who have been waiting for the publication and distribution of issue No. 8 of *Chō-Ryū*, we are aware of your concern that you have not yet received your copy, as your telephone calls have already indicated, and we apologise from the bottom of our hearts for this truly inexcusable situation.

Although we realise that it is a sudden and certainly surprising turn of events, we have had to

halt publication of this month's issue of *Chō-Ryū* for the time being in accordance with a decision by the Main Temple's Permanent Advisory Committee, its Council of Senior Officers, and its Council of Department Heads for the reasons given below.

As you may recall, it was on November 5, 1929, that *Chō-Ryū* was first published from its offices in Sōji-ji's Three Pines Building. Since then, except for a short period after the war when its name was changed to *News from the Mountain*, its publication has continued inflaggingly over sixty years with news of events at the Temple as well as cultural and religious information and has fulfilled its role as the core activity of this Temple's Publications Department.

So why have we had to suspend publication of a magazine having such a tradition?

When we look back on the past records of our predecessors and what you our readers have come to expect through your patronage, we feel a deep regret in our hearts, but the extreme decision to suspend publication has arisen from concrete indications as well as remorseful and apologetic recognition of errors involving human rights violations that this Temple's Publications Department has committed over several years.

During these past years there are those in the Publications Department who have compiled and published time and again discriminatory articles such as:

1. Kojima Shōan Rōshi's cartoon, "Karmic Retribution" (*Chō-Ryū*);
2. Aoyama Shuntō Rōshi's "The Clouds on the Mountain, the Moon in the Sea, Indeed according to Shakyamuni's Teachings that Expound Equality: Thoughts on the Question of Cooperative Harmony" (*Chō-Ryū*);
3. Nagai Tokumyō Rōshi's "Recollections of the Japanese Military Government of the South" (*Chō-Ryū*);

4. Araki Ryōtoku Rōshi's "*Uranbāna...*" (educational text in the oBon 1990 issue of *Myōju*).

and made a great nuisance of themselves wherever people are afflicted with discrimination and wherever they are striving to promote the protection of human rights. Despite Michida's "Speech against Discrimination" they have ignored the goals of human rights protection, which have been wrestled with as a religious doctrine and have even treated with contempt the official proclamation in February 1986 by the Temple's Superintendent Priest (*kanchō*), which aimed at establishing the fundamental principles for emancipation of villages. The offense of continually trampling under foot those who suffer from discrimination while being unable to see through the phenomenon of discrimination from within is extremely grave and is a state of affairs that we profoundly regret.

As to the causes of this, a study of human rights by this Temple as well as by the appropriate departments has lacked thoroughness and had not reached the point where we could ward off by way of our own pain the pain of people exposed to discrimination everywhere; further our organisation had become inflexible and we have uncovered errors arising from habits developed outside the way duties are pursued.

If in the course of time we did not straighten things out and conceive a policy that restored confidence, then lamentably we would invite the consequences that come from defiling the splendid sixty-year history of *Chō-Ryū* and betraying the expectations of you our readers.

Therefore, at this time, we have changed personnel in the Publications Department and have begun revision of the structure and organisation of this Temple's publishing activities. And, of course, not surprisingly, we have decided to halt publication of *Chō-Ryū* as the form the accompanying sacrifice and pain of all this must take.

The period during which we are suspending regular publication will continue until the management of a proper Publications Department is restored and we have conscientiously and systematically removed organisational defects such as the insertion and publication of discriminatory articles. During this period of suspension we pledge that we will gauge how established awareness of human rights is within the department by means of a thorough study of human rights and make the greatest possible effort to continue various additional reforms and renovations.

The sudden stoppage of publication is truly regrettable, and we acknowledge that halting a periodical for even a short interval is serious indeed. However, we have made the decision at this time because we are convinced that there has not been sufficient reflection and apology, though we would characterize dealing with these matters as a feeling of cutting one's own body and letting the blood flow.

Hereafter, we will examine how the Publications Department will be rebuilt and how we will open up the prospects of publishing activities themselves. As a recompense to you our readers we will make every effort to deliver the next issue to you as soon as possible. As to the discriminatory articles, we are determined to apologise to whomsoever they have caused a nuisance.

We also regret our delay in mentioning this matter: financial backing and regular subscriptions that are already on deposit are being administered by this Temple in view of its liability and we wish to allocate subscription fees to issues of the revised publication. While there may be genuine business objections to this, we entreat you to grant us your understanding in this regard as well.

Gasshō,

September 1 1990

To you our readers of *Chō-Ryū*.

From:-

Acting Publisher<sup>2</sup> of *Chō-Ryū*,  
Daihonzan Sōji-ji's Prior, Saitō Shingi.

Acting Editor<sup>2</sup> of *Chō-Ryū*,  
Daihonzan Sōji-ji's Vice-prior,  
Publication Department Acting Executive  
Director, Shibu Ryōkō.

Daihonzan Sōji-ji,  
Publication Department Assistant  
Executive, Kosugi Senshō.

I, personally, and the community of Shasta Abbey would like to thank the Sōji-ji authorities for taking so decisive a step with regard to human rights, etc., for as we perceive it, this is truly the Buddhist Way. Any member of our congregation or other person who may read our *journal* should, if they encounter any of the above articles mentioned or any others that may contain discriminatory statements or communications, understand from the above that these are isolated personal opinions and have nothing whatsoever to do with the True Teaching of Sōtō Zen.

#### Notes

1. The translation was done by Rev. Hubert Nearman, priest-trainee.
2. The usual terms for publisher and editor are not used in the closing of the letter; the words *hakkōnin* and *henshūnin* suggest a temporary assumption of a position.

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## Meditation Groups: The Question of Affiliation

As you all know, most of the meditation groups that are based upon our practice are affiliated to the Priory and their existence is made known to anyone who enquires. These groups ideally consist of a number of members who have a few years experience of the practice and some who are Lay Ministers who can offer meditation instruction to newcomers.

There are also what we have called 'stage one groups' which consist of those who are newer to the practice and whose numbers are still very small. Because they are just getting started, and may not have someone who is either a Lay Minister or someone who has been authorised by the Priory to offer meditation instruction to newcomers, they are not officially affiliated and their existence is not advertised. In essence, the stage one groups are just groups of like-minded friends who meet regularly to follow the practice. It usually follows that stage one groups, as they get more established, move on to become affiliated.

Affiliation with the Priory means that the group can make its existence known through listings and advertisements etc. as a group following the practice of the O.B.C. It should be understood that affiliation does not confer a seal of merit on the individual training of the members; and, conversely, if your group is not yet affiliated, it is not necessarily a reflection of the state of your training.

A question has arisen recently over what happens when a group ceases to be affiliated. When this happens, it is the group and not the individual members who are no longer affiliated. Individuals are still members of the congregation if they wish to be. They are still very welcome at the Priory and to attend our other meditation groups. In short, they are to be treated exactly like any other congregation member.

A group will only cease to be affiliated if either the group as a whole decides to end their affiliation, or if the Priory feels that the group is not following the practice or responding positively to the teaching offered.

In these circumstances, if the group continues to exist, it should be viewed like any other independent group. Its members are welcome at all our meetings and their practice should be respected. If they choose to become affiliated again, provided the proper conditions are met, this will always be possible.

When a group loses its affiliation, some members of that group may still consider themselves members of the Priory congregation, and others may not. It is up to each member to make up his or her own mind and the Priory will assume that all such members wish to remain part of the congregation unless they indicate otherwise.

Rev. Daishin Morgan, M.O.B.C.  
Abbot.

\* \* \*

# The Wisdom of Vigour

Rev. Mildred Läser

Virya Paramita—one of the Six Wisdoms'—has been translated into English as vigour, energy and diligence. It seems to be one of those complex Sanskrit terms for which a Western language does not offer an exact translation in one word only. However, looking at the English terms can shed some light on the matter.

Vigour in the dictionary is interpreted as 'active physical strength or energy; flourishing physical condition; mental or moral strength, force or energy.' This seems to suggest that the attributes of a vigorous trainee are a healthy body and a strong will, which both, no doubt, can become precious offerings to the Eternal. But it is a rather one-sided picture of vigour. Not all of us are endowed with healthy bodies or think of themselves as having iron wills; but all are called by the Eternal and can cultivate stillness—the true source of vigour.

I have come to see in the course of training that impaired physical health and strength does not equal lack of vigour. Lack of vigour, however, can mean getting caught up in the feelings of misery that are likely to go along with physical weakness, instead of offering them up and using them as an opportunity to take refuge in the Eternal rather than in a concept of how things ought to be. As with all areas we have to work at in religious training, we need to be flexible with this, to be willing to offer physical well-being and energy when they are there and, on the other hand, to be willing to be gentle with ourselves when the body cannot physically handle a task. Learning to say 'no' in a gentle and appropriate way without getting caught up in thoughts of being useless and the like, and simply acknowledging one's limits, will be an act of vigour.

Reverend Master Jiyu-Kennett has pointed out in a tape lecture that the bubbling energy of children, which many of us might admire with envy, is to a great extent the result of karma, an expression of 'the stinking bag of fish' that this being has inherited from the past. The bag smelling of fish expresses that, although the good or bad actions have been done and as such are over, and the dead fish have been taken out of the bag, the bag still stinks of fish: that is, we still have the potential to act in old ways which are influenced by past actions. Looking at my vigorous behaviour of body, speech and mind, I have to admit more often than not, that vigour manifests itself as an expression of wilfulness, the karmic drive to ignore the subtle voice of the heart. Again, if I long to know the Eternal and wish to do something about 'the stinking bag of fish' I have to take refuge in meditation, the only source of how to learn to be still and allow ingrained habits of body, speech and mind to be converted.

The other English term for Virya Paramita, 'diligence,' is described in the dictionary as 'hard-work, steady in application, industrious, attentive to duties.' This points to the more subtle layers of vigour and the kind of hard work we are undertaking with meditation. Diligently and patiently we practise letting go of all that attempts to draw us away from the still centre. Sometimes vigour means using our will to confront ourselves with a firm 'no' if we find ourselves sulking in the contents of our minds; at other times, a gentle patting ourselves on the shoulder can call us back to being still. There can be a sense of humour and tenderness in that: 'Come on, here you are again caught up in the same old cycle, come back,' rather than getting angry and judgemental about our behaviour. The hard work is the steady application of stillness, however tempting the waves in our minds picture themselves. As we go on, the firm or more gentle act of will to point ourselves back to stillness mingles with the willingness to offer up all that arises in meditation, be it banal or exciting, horrendous or delightful. For example, we experience

that pain, fully felt and wholeheartedly offered, will eventually no longer matter and often even dissolve, leaving us with having understood a bit more about its roots, or not. It does not really matter. All that matters is the steady application of stillness, not judging the apparent outcome. Diligently, we point ourselves back to the path of stillness; unremittingly, stillness offers itself to us.

Another way of vigour arising naturally out of stillness is demonstrated in the meditation posture. If we wish to sit upright 'in the presence of the Buddha' we have to let go of the body's urge to shift and to fidget. In so doing we will become more sensitive to our posture. We can experience the resistance that expresses itself in physical tension as well as slackness, and we might see more clearly the mental attitudes that show in the physical posture and behaviour. We learn from there to ground ourselves physically as well as mentally. There is no need to wilfully push our bodies into the 'right' position—it does not exist as an absolute. On the other hand, there might be a need to apply more vigour to habitual slackness. The meditation position then reveals a natural relaxation and strength and 'the absolute upright that holds as it is many phenomena within its own delicate balance'<sup>2</sup> becomes apparent. A delicate balance of body and mind in the meditation posture and a sense of vigour (in other words alertness and openness) go hand in hand. 'Yes, but,' you might say, 'all there seems to be is a tense and aching body!' We can choose to sit still with it as with anything else and accept it fully.

Have you ever watched a small child who has not been prematurely forced to sit but has found its way to sitting in its own time? These little beings are firmly grounded and perfectly upright and straight in their backs without strain! In watching a one to two-year-old child or looking at pictures of toddlers, you can see for yourself what I am talking about. It has always struck me with awe how much patient effort a child puts into the process of learning to sit

upright. Although most of us have lost this trust and effortlessness in the process of growing up, or in the course of our adult lives, we can find our way back to it.

As in formal meditation, stillness is the foundation of vigour in daily life. We use our wills to refrain from breaking the Precepts and are willing to repent the slightest wrongdoing. These are not glamorous acts but modest acknowledgements that there is work to be done. In this way we learn to 'bless the Virtuous Buddha who wanders step by step to grow the precious Blossom.'<sup>3</sup>

Buddhist Festival Ceremonies and daily ceremonial are full of encouragement to walk the way of diligent training which washes away the seeming burden of karma more than anything else in our lives. It is important to follow the compassionate advice of our seniors and to trust the incidents of our training where we can clearly see the validity of their advice. All who have been to the Priory for any length of time know how the daily schedule in the monastery points us compassionately to making a steady effort in applying stillness to all activities of everyday life, be it meditation, work, taking meals, relaxing or whatever else may occur during the day. What seems from the outside to be a rather monotonous and unpretentious life is an ongoing gentle push to open up and break with old habits, and to see the work of the Eternal in all facets of ordinary daily life.

The last description of diligence in the dictionary 'attentive to duties' describes the vigour that is needed in fulfilling our daily tasks. Whatever duty needs to be done in daily life asks for our full attention and care. No task is too menial to be taken lightly, and no task is too big to get befuddled about and to forget to simply take one step at a time. In this way we can follow Great Master Dōgen's advice to be 'dutiful beings,' to diligently fulfill our first duty as human beings—to get out of the way and to allow the Eternal to be manifest in our every action.

## Notes

1. The Six Paramitas or Wisdoms: generosity, morality, patience, vigour, meditation, wisdom,
2. The Most Excellent Mirror - Samadhi, P.T.N.H. Jiyu-Kennett, *The Liturgy of the Order of Buddhist Contemplatives for the Laity*, 2nd, ed. (Mt Shasta, California; Shasta Abbey Press, 1990), p. 61,
3. Lotus Ceremony, *ibid.*, p.184.

\* \* \*



Wesak 1991 in Bristol (see p. 40)

# An Experience of the Transfer of Merit

David Cowsky, Lay Minister, O.B.C.

[The following article was first published in the *Journal of the Order of Buddhist Contemplatives*, Volume 5, Number 4. It is reprinted here with the author's permission.]

*It is a situation we are all familiar with: someone is seriously ill or in a condition of great mental or physical suffering, and we want to help. The offering or transferring of Merit to the individual is an option; but is it adequate? Are we really helping? I offer the following personal experience of transfer of Merit as an example of the powerful and profound effects this simple act can have.*

Several years ago, I came down with one of those aggressive viruses that hits suddenly and hard and progresses rapidly. I couldn't have had better medical treatment. As my symptoms progressed, my bedroom was transformed into a mini-hospital by our best friend, Al, an excellent doctor, and my wife, Kathie, who is a nurse. I won't trace the course of the illness, except to say that in less than forty-eight hours from when I began to feel some slight discomfort, I had to be moved to the hospital, seriously ill, in spite of their best efforts to treat me at home.

As I lay there in hospital, it was not long before some part of me became aware that I had entered the process of dying. I was conscious of a sense of retreating or withdrawing within. The image that comes to mind is that of a watchman going around at night in an empty factory, shutting down the machines, closing the doors and turning off all the lights one by one.

The interesting thing is that while this was occurring, I began naturally to meditate. In spite of an intense discomfort—pneumonia in both lungs—which

kept me from getting important sleep and rest, in spite of the bottles hung around the bed and tubes running into my arms, food that wouldn't stay down, interruptions by nurses and doctors to give me injections, change I.V's, prescribe medication and monitor vital signs, I retained a deep meditative focus. While the medical staff were doing what they needed to do, something within me continued to do what it needed to do.

In their professional lives, Al and Kathie worked closely on a daily basis as part of a team treating the terminally ill and the dying. Now it was Al's turn to inform Kathie that my symptoms weren't coming under control and that my condition was very serious.

Although I didn't know it then, at around this time Kathie called the Abbey and asked that my name be included for Transfer of Merit. It was Sunday evening. I continued to get sicker, and I continued in meditation.

I don't know who, or how many from Shasta Abbey and elsewhere that Kathie contacted, transferred Merit that night and other nights while I was ill. I believe, however, that because I was in meditation, I was particularly open and receptive not just to receiving it but also to experiencing it. I can only say that late that evening, I experienced what can best be described as a surge, a sudden influx of spiritual power and peace. At the same time, my symptoms began to retreat. My body slept and rested. By morning, the medical staff coming on shift were surprised and relieved by my sudden change for the better. I was still ill, but it was clear that I was out of the woods and getting better. There the medical story ends except to add that I was able to go home in three days and back to work in a little over two weeks. It was more than two years, however, before my lungs and general physical well-being began to approach their former state of health.

I came away with two things from that experience.

The first has to do with death and meditation. Religious individuals, I believe, can have a particular anxiety regarding their own death: "Will I be able to do it right? Will I make a good death?" we ask. I believe that our daily spiritual training is there available for us at the time of our death, indeed, that it is a vital, integral part of our death. So while I am aware that I must continue my spiritual work now while I am alive in preparation for death, I am confident that when I die, it will be possible, indeed natural, to approach it in meditation, regardless of what is occurring at the physical level. I find this quite comforting.

The second thing I came away with has to do with "Transfer of Merit." For years, I believed that the transfer of Merit to me had taken a physical form, that it had reversed the course of my illness. I have never doubted that those who sent Merit offered it freely, without attachment, without asking that I get better; but I believed it took the form of my getting better. I know now, however, that in addition to a physical recovery, something far deeper took place that night. What happened is that I experienced a transfer of Merit, an ineffable gift of training grounded in faith. The focus of all spiritual effort and training and the true source of all Merit are the Eternal. It was this which was offered purely and received openly at that moment.

In our lives, whether the event be simple or dramatic, any experience of the Eternal leads to faith. When I offer Merit now, I do so in complete faith, and without any attachment. What form it will take, where it will lead a being, is beyond my comprehension or even desire to comprehend. I know, however, from my own experience of receiving Merit, that it is manifestly worthwhile to offer it, to send it, that it goes from us like an arrow in the night, capable of penetrating the boundaries of the universe, the borders of infinite heavens and hells with unimaginable power and potential for helping beings.

What I received that night was knowledge and faith. The transfer of Merit took the form of medicine for the physical body at one level. It helped save my life, and I am grateful for that. But as the Scriptures say over and over again, the true medicine is the Dharma, that which speaks of the Eternal. Even though I didn't understand it at the time, I received true medicine that night. That moves one beyond gratitude.

*The offering of Merit is available to each of us at all times. Is it adequate? Are we really helping? The answer is unquestionably yes, but we must drop our limited perception and not demand that help be in the form of an immediate cure or a release from suffering. All that is required is the heart of Active Love and a non-seeking mind of faith—faith not just in the power and efficacy of the act but in the adequacy and rightness of things just as they are, even that which exists in suffering. The beauty is that the practice of the Transfer of Merit also leads to these very things.*

\* \* \*

# Dependent Origination

Rev. Kōshin Schomberg, M.O.B.C.

[The following article was first published in the *Journal of the Order of Buddhist Contemplatives*, Volume 5 , Number 3]

## 9. Overviews of the Teaching.

The previous article in this series emphasized the intuitive and experiential character of a genuine understanding of the Teaching of Dependent Origination. In this article, I would like to discuss briefly two helpful ways of grouping the steps of the Teaching so as to reveal its simple and profound spiritual content.'

The first traditional way of grouping the steps shows the way in which the law of causality functions through past, present and possible future existences. This grouping is as follows:

On ignorance depend volitional activities,

Division I  
Past Existences

On volitional activities depends re-linking consciousness,

On relinking consciousness depend body and mind,

On body and mind depends the functioning of the six senses,

On the functioning of the six senses depends sense experience,

On sense experience depends feeling,

On feeling depends craving,

On craving depends clinging,

On clinging depends becoming,

Division II  
Present Existence

On becoming depends rebirth,  
On rebirth depend old age, death and  
the continuation of suffering,

Division III  
Possible Future  
Existences

Division I shows the roots of suffering in past existences: under the influence of ignorance, beings did volitional actions which resulted in the continuation of confusion into this present life.

Division II shows that the existence and specific form of this present body and mind provide the basis for all experience; that painful and pleasurable feelings are an inextricable part of all experience; that attachments (cravings) and aversions can easily grow out of these feelings and that the willful indulgence of greed, hate and delusion again, as in past existences, manifests as willful actions (becoming) which propel the stream of karma toward rebirth.

Division III shows that, unless something is done in this present life to stop the rolling of this wheel of suffering, a mass of confusion will again be left at the time of death. This mass of confusion will again be inherited by beings in future rebirths, and these beings will be subject to all the vicissitudes and pains of existence.

This threefold division of the Teaching of Dependent Origination is the single greatest aid for seeing the spiritual purpose of the Teaching (the clarification of the nature of transitory existence so as to enable beings to free themselves from ignorance and craving). Throughout this series of articles I have relied upon this analysis of the Teaching.

A second way of analysing the steps of the Teaching of Dependent Origination does so according to whether a particular step emphasizes karmic cause or karmic effect. In this way of analysis, the steps appear as follows:

On ignorance depend volitional activities,

Cause

On volitional activities depends re-linking consciousness,

On relinking consciousness depend body and mind,

On body and mind depends the functioning of the six senses,

Consequence

On the functioning of the six senses depends sense experience,

On sense experience depends feeling,

On feeling depends craving,

On craving depends clinging,

Cause

On clinging depends becoming,

On becoming depends rebirth,

On rebirth depend old age, death and the continuation of suffering,

Consequence

From this way of grouping the steps of the Teaching, we can see at a glance two ways of using the will in training. All of the steps marked "cause" are steps in which a volitional choice is involved. All of the steps marked "consequence" indicate aspects of life which, once the causes and conditions upon which they depend are activated, cannot be changed. For example, while craving depends on feeling, this dependence is very different from, say, the dependence of the six senses upon body and mind. In the latter case, there is no element of choice: the six senses function simultaneously with body and mind as aspects of body and mind. Nothing we do can change this fact. In the relation between craving and feeling, however, craving is dependent upon feeling through the volitional dwelling upon like and dislike. Thus, through spiritual training, craving can be reduced even while feeling continues to function normally as an inextricable aspect of sense experience. This

example may seem to be technical, but the point being made here is really quite simple: the steps marked "cause" show where choices are being made; the steps marked "consequence" show what must flow forth from those choices. If we do not want certain consequences, we must deal with their causes. To use another example, it is futile and self defeating to seek to deny and stop in our present life the process of old age and death: these are inevitable consequences of birth. If we wish to stop the flow of suffering through continuing births and deaths, we must deal directly with the volitional activities which cause birth and death. And the right use of the will with respect to all the steps marked "consequence" in the above list is in the direction of all-acceptance. Thus to expand the present example, we can accept and bow to old age and death, rather than futilely wasting precious time and energy in efforts to resist them. And that time and energy can then be used for the training that undermines craving, clinging and becoming--the conditions leading to rebirth, and thus to old age and death in possible future existences.

Note that in this last example, I am speaking of old age and death as aspects of our present life. This points up the fact that, while the threefold division of the steps of the teaching into past, present and possible future existences is useful and coincides with the real intent of the Teaching, it is obvious that all twelve steps are to be found acting in the present lives of beings. There is no need to construe the Teaching of Dependent Origination in a narrow and dogmatic way. It is, in every feature, a practical teaching and, as such, is never in any aspect far removed from the practicalities of our everyday life. For example, while the term "ignorance" occurs in the Teaching in the Past Existences division, clearly ignorance is present as an underlying condition and cause in all volitional activity in which craving is indulged and deepened into clinging. An intuitive and experiential understanding of the Teaching yields a fluid, kaleidoscopic approach to all of the terms and steps.

The Teaching is given in its traditional manner to emphasize certain points which are of great practical importance to all who would stop the rolling of the wheel of karma. Throughout this series of articles, I have tried to emphasize these points. Yet if I were to rewrite these articles now, I would do so somewhat differently. The understanding of this magnificent Teaching can never be static: it is always developing, deepening, discovering new aspects related to immediate spiritual need. The Teaching says as much by implication as by explicit explanation. The Mahayana Teaching of *shunyata*, the Immaculacy of Nothingness, for example, is contained by implication in the Teaching of Dependent Origination. And *shunyata* is the essence of Wisdom. The final article in this series will examine this relationship.

\* \* \*

#### Note

1. These two ways of analysing the Teaching of Dependent Origination are discussed in Ven. Nyānatiloka, *Buddhist Dictionary* (Kandy, Sri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society, 1980), pp. 157-167, especially p. 169.

## Scaling the Glass Mountains

There is nothing for it but to go straight up the face. How do I climb that which is sheer and glassy? By going straight up, by not thinking whether I will live or die, by not thinking I am inadequate or adequate, male or female. Maleness and femaleness cannot help me here; here the world of the opposites ceases. There is no way up for one who is stuck in inadequacy or in adequacy.

Up and up and up, without ever doubting my ability, without looking down, without thinking, without caring about the lightning that comes from the storms, without fearing the ferocious animals that I may meet, without worrying about the darkness or the avalanches, holding fast to the memory of the kenshō; up, up and on. Will the climb to the top never end? Perhaps everyone else was right, perhaps to go off into despair—but I *know* this is wrong and will not listen to the little voice that says, "Go back. You are too weak, you cannot do it. You have not been good enough to climb this mountain; you have not done enough to train yourself—you do not know how to climb." And I say, "Quiet. I *can* climb and I *will*."

Rev. Master Jiyu-Kennett.

*How to Grow a Lotus Blossom, Plate II.*

# News

**Monastic News:** On April 4, Rev. Master Daishin ordained Julian Skinner who received the name *Hōun Fristan* ('Rock of Peace of the Dharma Cloud'). We also welcome two new postulants: Jason Davies joined the community on May 10 and Mary Rowe on June 25.

Rev. Adelin Bryceson did her *Head Novice's Entry Ceremony* on May 14, the start of the Spring monastic retreat. Rev. Olwen Crookall-Greening has taken over as the Head Novice's Assistant. We congratulate these monks and postulants and offer our best wishes for their future training.

Rev. Saidō Kennaway and Rev. Gilbert Dunbar returned to the Priory from the Reading Buddhist Priory at the start of the *Ten Precepts Retreat*. Rev. Saidō and various monks have worked hard over the last eighteen months to establish the new Priory with great success; we are very grateful for their efforts. After the retreat, Rev. Mugō White took over from Rev. Saidō as the Prior with Rev. Mildred Läser as her assistant. We wish them both every success in their new responsibilities.

**Festivals & Ceremonies:** On March 31, we celebrated the *Festival of Manjusri Bodhisattva*, the Bodhisattva of Great Wisdom.

Forty-five lay trainees attended this year's *Ten Precepts Retreat [Jūkai]*, April 6-13. Eighteen of them received lay ordination: Dawn Ashmore, Keith Ayling, Meryl Cairns, Peter Connors, Colin Dewhurst, Martin Hall, David Hodge, Charles Holles, John Kaye, Thomas Kirwan, Iris Macallan, Chris Maj, David Mehers, Inge Roelands, Mary Rowe, Jane Shaw, Michael Shillitoe, and Tony Woods. We congratulate these new lay Buddhists in taking this next step in their training and wish them well in the future.

The *Festival of Great Master Keizan* was on April 21 and the *Festival of Avalokiteswara* on June 16.

On Sunday May 5, over fifty adults and fifteen children visited the Priory for *The Festival of the Buddha's Birth [Wesak]*. On this joyous Buddhist Festival, all those attending the ceremony ladle water over the baby Buddha's head; the children also place lotus buds in the fountain as an offering to the Buddha.

**Funerals & Memorials:** On April 15 in Harrogate, Rev. Edmund Cluett was the celebrant at the funeral of Peter Hodgkinson, husband of Hazel.

Rev. Master Daishin was celebrant at the funeral and cremation of Dave Fleming on Friday May 24 in Newcastle. Dave was a long-standing member of the congregation who had been ill for some time.

The next day over seventy of Dave's relatives and friends attended a memorial service at the Priory. After the ceremony, a beautiful potentilla shrub was planted in the cemetery in Dave's memory.

**Guest Department Notice:** As this year's Congregation Day is to be held on Saturday September 14, the introductory retreat scheduled for the weekend September 13-15 has been cancelled. We apologise for any inconvenience this may cause.

The weekend retreat October 11-13 is now planned to be a special retreat 'in preparation for the *Ten Precepts Retreat*,' [Jukai] which takes place next April. Members of meditation groups and others who are thinking of taking lay ordination during next year's *Ten Precepts Retreat* are encouraged to come to this special retreat if possible. (Anyone else who wishes to come will, of course, be most welcome.) The classes and discussions will focus on the meaning of lay ordination, the deepening of training in daily life, and the place of the *Ten Precepts Retreat* as an important step in one's religious life.

**Lay Ministry:** Twenty of our Lay Ministers and trainee Lay Ministers took part in this year's Lay Ministry retreat, May 28-June 2. Classes included a practical seminar on Buddhist funerals, the playing of the Training and Enlightenment Game as a source of teaching, the usual precenting, ceremonial, and choir sessions, as well as group discussions. During the retreat, Chris Barker and Sally Robertshaw received their Lay Minister's rhakusus and certificates marking their qualification as Lay Ministers of the Order of Buddhist Contemplatives. We heartily congratulate Sally and Chris and wish them every success in the future.

**Talks & Retreats:** Monks from the Priory have recently given talks and led meditation retreats in Newcastle, Harrogate, Manchester, Liverpool, and Aberdeen.

**Donations:** The community is most grateful for recent donations of two large conch shells, a meditation gong and *inkin* (signal gong), incense and incense box, a travelling altar and lotus sceptre; clothing, two Barbour jackets, work boots; filing tray, ring-binder, paper, and stamps; various shrubs and plants; a tin-opener, two mirrors, curtains, cupboards, drying cabinet, roll of double-sided tape, screwdrivers, and wire; Witch Hazel, golden seal and other herbs; soap and handcream; cat and dog treats.

The Kitchen has received donations of bread, fruit, chocolate, tea and coffee, muesli and honey; cheese, vegetables, vegetarian Cornish pasties, nuts, dates, butter, beans, oats and rice, jam and ice cream; peanut butter, sugar, sweets, biscuits; pasta, lasagna, vinegar, yoghurt, and cake; hummus, tempeh; marmite and mayonnaise; jellies, apple and orange juice; a commercial coffee-maker; and crisps.

On June 2 the Harnham Vihara celebrated its Tenth Anniversary. The next day two of the Harnham community arrived at the Priory with a generous donation of food from the previous day's celebration. We congratulate Harnham Vihara on its successful first

ten years and thank them for their kindness.

**Begging Bowl:** The Priory could use heavy-duty rubberised gloves for construction work.

\* \* \*

### THE READING BUDDHIST PRIORY

**Festival of the Buddha's Birth:** Rev. Mugō and Rev. Mildred, plus about forty congregation members in the South of England, celebrated the Buddha's Birth on Monday May 6 at the Chaplaincy Centre of the Bristol Polytechnic. Afterwards, there were naming ceremonies for Holly Pearl and Laura Alice, daughters of Will and Jill Turner of the London Serene Reflection Meditation Group. Two videos were shown—an episode of 'Monkey' and 'Sōtō Zen Buddhism'—and there were readings from *The Light of Asia* by Sir Edwin Arnold describing the Buddha's Birth.

**Lay Ministry Event:** On April 27, ten members of the Lay Ministry programme met at Angie Pedley's house for an informal get-together and a shared meal. Afterwards, there was Midday Service, a taped lecture by Rev. Master Daishin, and a useful discussion and tea at the Priory. Another event is planned for Saturday September 21. Everyone on the Lay Ministry programme is welcome: for more details, please ring Angie Pedley (0734.413230).

**Donations:** The Reading Priory is grateful for the many donations it has received recently: these include food, kitchen, office, and sound equipment, and much needed Sacristy items. We are also grateful to members who have spent much time and energy working on the house and garden. The Reading Priory needs an electric typewriter (second-hand would do), and an asperge for holy water. Offers of help with wood-working projects will be gratefully received.

\* \* \*

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